



Sen. Rasmussen with Teal Shore of Olympia, who served as a Senate page during the 2004 legislative session.



Committees: Senate Ways & Means; Senate Agriculture; Senate Rules; Joint Select Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs; Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Trade Policy

2004 Legislative Report

I'm always here for you!

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Dear Neighbors,

Although the 2004 legislative session lasted just 60 days, we accomplished many important things for the people of Washington and for the 2nd District.

In even numbered years like this one, the Legislature passes a supplemental operating budget. This session I returned to the Senate Ways & Means Committee, where I worked to craft a budget to grow our economy and meet the challenges of these tight financial times while still putting people first.

The no-new-taxes budget gives our state's home health-care workers a 50 cent-per-hour raise and helps lower premiums on health insurance for low-income children. It includes tax incentives to encourage high-tech companies to locate in rural areas of our state and clears the way for a new autism resource center for children and families here in the South Sound.

Education is the paramount duty of our state, and this session offered some bright spots for our schools. We were able to reform the Washington Assessment of Student Learning to allow students more opportunities to pass the test. The Learning Assistance Program was changed to drive dollars to the neediest students, and school districts will receive more of the levy dollars approved by their voters.

I appreciate everyone in the 2nd District who called or wrote to me during the session. Input on your views is critical to me as I work to represent the concerns of our community and our state. Please feel free to contact me or my staff any time about these and other issues. Remember, I'm your state government troubleshooter and I'm always here for you.

Warmest regards,

*Sen. Marilyn Rasmussen
2nd Legislative District*



***Thanks
to all my
2004 pages!***

*Gabriel Hug of
Spanaway, left,
and Bridgette Leech
of Eatonville*



Yelm 510 Loop receives funding

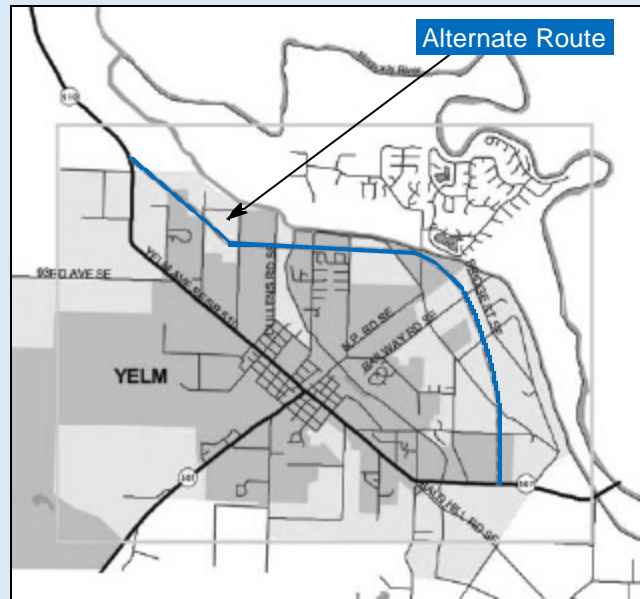
My number one transportation goal for this year was realized when \$1.2 million for Yelm's proposed Highway 510 Loop project was secured by my amendment to the Senate's transportation budget. This was one of only four projects statewide that received new funding in the final 2004 supplemental transportation budget.

The 510 loop will provide an alternate route around the heavily congested intersection of state Routes 507 and 510, one of Thurston County's worst traffic choke points. Yelm is the county's fastest-growing city, and the current two-lane highways weren't designed to handle the increased traffic.

Yelm has just 3,830 residents, but nearly 35,000 vehicles travel through town every day. As the city expands further, that number is projected to increase to nearly 67,000 vehicles per day by 2020.

The city began environmental work on the Highway 510 loop project in the early 1990s. The \$1.2 million in the transportation budget will help

accomplish the next steps in the process, including acquiring right-of-way and performing preliminary engineering work.



Autism facility in Tacoma closer to reality

South Sound families with autistic children will have access to a valuable resource once a new autism center is established at the University of Washington's Tacoma campus.

For years I have fought for services for South Sound families. I'm pleased that my plea for these children was heard. This year's supplemental budget includes \$300,000 to renovate a building near the UW-Tacoma campus and \$375,000 for staffing. It's a modest start, but it will make a huge difference for up to 160 families each year. Training will also be offered for teachers and para-professionals in the greater Tacoma area who work with autistic children.

The UW-Tacoma satellite facility will augment the UW's main autism center in Seattle, which provides resources to families of children with the developmental disorder and training to professionals who work with autistic children. Demand is so high that many autistic children have been put on a rolling two-and-a-half year waiting list for services they never receive.

Early intervention has proven to help improve an autistic child's IQ and language skills, and can save the state up to \$3 million in special education funding over the course of a young autistic child's life.

Ensuring food safety/mad cow

Food safety isn't an option. No one in Washington or around the world should ever wonder if food produced in our state is safe to eat.

The Legislature passed several bills that will make Washington a national leader in preventing the outbreak of infectious diseases such as BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) among animals. The state Department of Agriculture is already doing an excellent job, and these measures will augment its efforts.

- A bill I sponsored (SB 6107) clarifies and strengthens the state's ability to quickly investigate potential disease outbreaks. It gives state agriculture officials the authority to quarantine an animal for probable cause that the animal presents a serious risk from disease or contamination.
- I worked to include \$270,000 in the supplemental operating budget to support BSE research at Washington State University, which will speed up the process for testing cattle that move to slaughter.

Other legislation I supported will help establish an animal identification program and control the movement of so-called "downer" animals, which can't walk or stand unassisted. When combined with federal legislation, these new laws will assure the safety of Washington's food products.

Saving our military bases

The U.S. military will begin its next round of base closures next year. We're proud to have Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base as our neighbors here in the South Sound, and we should do all we can to keep them here.

A bill I sponsored would prevent cities or counties from allowing "incompatible" development around military installations. Incompatible development could mean adjacent high-rise buildings, schools, dense residential neighborhoods or other land uses that would jeopardize a base's security or safety, reducing its military value and increasing the chance it would be recommended for closure under the federal Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act (BRAC).

This legislation would not affect the proposed Cross-Base Highway, which will link south Pierce County to Interstate 5 through McChord and Fort Lewis.

Besides being our good neighbors, our military bases are important to our state's economy and our nation's security. Developing smart land-use requirements is one way state and local governments can make our

UPDATE: More federal funding requested for Elbe rest area

The state Department of Transportation has asked U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and Rep. Jennifer Dunn to help secure \$1.3 million in federal funds for the construction of the proposed safety rest area on state Route 7 in Elbe.

Highway 7 is the road to Paradise and the gateway to Mt. Rainier, and more services are badly needed. This long-overdue rest area is critical for the more than 1 million tourists who visit our beautiful Mt. Rainier National Park each year, and we're doing everything we can to make sure the opening date of April 2006 is realized.

state's military installations more valuable to the federal government and help prevent their closure.

Righting a historical wrong

In our state's first recorded case of capital punishment in 1858, legendary Nisqually Chief Leschi was hanged after being wrongly convicted of murdering a U.S. army soldier. This session the Legislature recognized this historical injustice and supported the Nisqually Tribe's effort to reverse the conviction of an innocent man.

The 2nd Legislative District includes the entire Nisqually River from Mt. Rainier to the delta — including the Nisqually Indian Reservation — so I was proud to sponsor Senate Resolution 8727. The resolution affirms the Senate's support for the Nisqually Tribe's petition asking the state Supreme Court to vacate Leschi's conviction.

There was much public outcry over Leschi's conviction and execution at the time: The U.S. Army and the Pierce County Sheriff refused to execute him because he was considered a prisoner of war, and even his hangman said later that he believed he had executed

an innocent man. That outcry has evolved into an effort by Nisqually tribal members and others to have Leschi's name formally cleared by the state.

Chief Leschi's conviction is one of the saddest episodes in Washington's history and it casts a dark cloud over us even today. This is a chance for us to say, as a state, that we are truly sorry.



Nisqually tribal members join Sen. Rasmussen (middle row, second from right), Sen. Karen Fraser (center), and Sen. Dan Swecker (back row, third from right) in Olympia.

There were some disappointments this session.

Charter schools: I was outraged that \$637,000 was included in the supplemental operating budget to establish charter schools, even though our state's voters rejected the idea twice. We must not divert taxpayer money from our already underfunded public schools to start schools that have no accountability for six years, and answer only to an unelected board of directors.

Levy supermajority: Legislation was proposed that would have allowed school maintenance and operation levies to pass with a simple majority of votes instead of the current 60 percent supermajority. Unfortunately, this bill failed to pass.

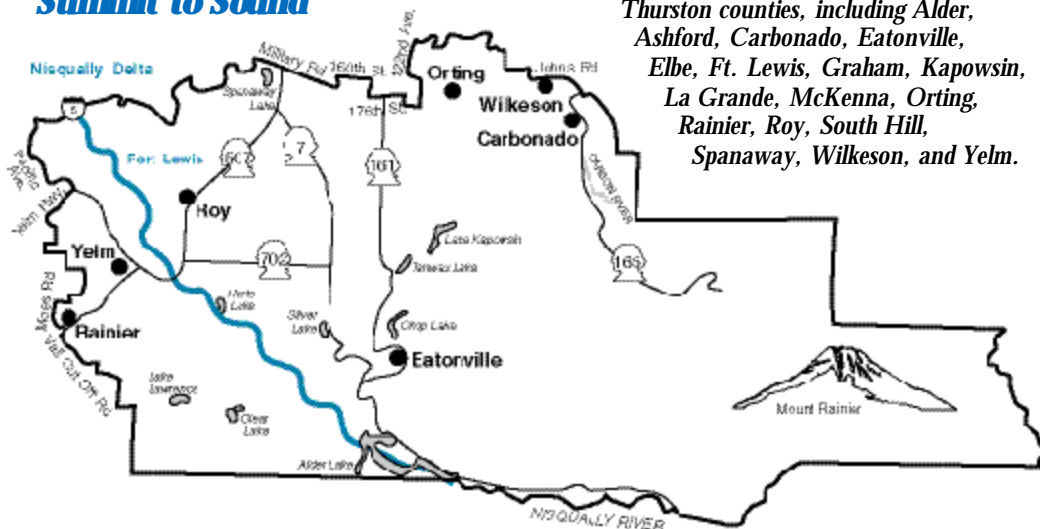
Medical malpractice reform: It's appalling to me that no meaningful medical malpractice reform passed this session.

I supported legislation that would have addressed this issue, but the measure died in the House of Representatives.

Dedicated doctors such as Eatonville's own Dr. Tom Van Eaton will continue to be forced from their practices by skyrocketing medical malpractice insurance premiums until we take steps to ensure that the high cost of insurance doesn't undermine the high quality of care that Washington residents expect.

2nd Legislative District

“Summit to Sound”



***Represents portions of Pierce and
Thurston counties, including Alder,
Ashford, Carbonado, Eatonville,
Elbe, Ft. Lewis, Graham, Kapowsin,
La Grande, McKenna, Orting,
Rainier, Roy, South Hill,
Spanaway, Wilkeson, and Yelm.***



My legislative assistants are Bob McDaniel of Olympia and Luanne Green of Puyallup.

***My staff and I are
always here for you.
Contact us anytime!***



Senator Marilyn Rasmussen

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